DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 557 RC 018 168

TITLE	Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va.; Virginia Education Association, Richmond.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Sep 90
CONTRACT	400-86-0001
NOTE	56p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Classroom Techniques; Educational Policy; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; Institutional Characteristics; Mail Surveys; *Multigraded Classes; Program Evaluation; Small Schools; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS	Virginia

ABSTRACT

This study, conducted by a group of teachers, examined various aspects of multigrade classrooms in Virginia through a mail survey of the state's multigrade teachers whose names and addresses were available (87 responded). A 21-item Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey developed by the study group was used to collect information. Some of the findings were: (1) the "typical" survey respondent was a veteran teacher who had 2 or more years experience teaching grade combination classes; (2) the majority of teachers had taught grade combination classes in consecutive years, and in most cases these classes had been assigned; (3) grade combination classes occurred most frequently in small schools; (4) average grade combination class size ranged from 16 to 25 students; (5) basic skills subjects most frequently required double preparations; (6) most multigrade teachers arranged field trips for their students; (7) the most frequently mentioned instructional methods were integrating the curriculum and peer tutoring; (8) lack of time was the most frequently cited difficulty; (9) advantages were cited in peer tutoring, integrated curricula, small grouping, enriched academic activities, better socialization, and extra resource and support; (10) there was a diversity of opinion about appropriate policies for grade combination teaching; and (11) some recommendations for effective instruction and classroom management were to be positive, prepared, flexible, and consistent. This document contains an extensive bibliography and an annotated list of resources. Appendices include respondents' names, a memo, the survey, and a map showing the distribution of multigrade classes in Virginia. (KS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices

A Joint Study by

VEA
Virginia Education Associationn
Richmond, Virginia

and

AEL
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Charleston, West Virginia

Sptember 1990

Funded by the

OERI
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
Washington, D. C.

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL), Inc., works with educators in ongoing R & D-based efforts to improve education and educational opportunity. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. It also operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. AEL works to improve:

- professional quality,
- curriculum and instruction,
- community support, and
- opportunity for access to quality education by all children.

Information about AEL projects, programs, and services is available by writing or calling AEL, Post Office Box 1348, Charleston, West Virginia 25325; 800/624-9120 (outside WV), 800/344-6646 (in WV), and 347-0400 (local); 304/347-0487 (FAX number).

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number 400-86-0001. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. Government.

These materials are issued in draft form for developmental purposes.

AEL is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgements v

INTRODUCTION 1
- Planning the Study 1
- Conducting the Study 2
- Purpose 3
- Methodology 3
- Help Us Improve this Publication 4

RATIONALE 5
- Effects of Multigrade Classes 5
- Obstacles to Multigrade Instuctional Organization 6
- Teaching Strategies 7

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY 9
- Teacher Experience Characteristics 9
- Class and School Characteristics 10
- Curriculum and Instructional Strategies Employed 12
- Perceived Advantages and Difficulties of Grade Combination Teaching 14
- Perceived Assistance Sources and Resources 18
- Policy Recommendations 19
- Effective Instructional and Classroom Management Strategies 21

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STUDY GROUP MEMBERS 25

BIBLIOGRAPHY 27

RESOURCES 33

APPENDICES
- Appendix A: Survey Respondents 41
- Appendix B: Grade Combination Teacher Locater Form 45
- Appendix C: Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey 49
- Appendix D: Map—Distribution of Grade Combination Classes 57

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Virginia Education Association (VEA) and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) wish to thank the following study group members who planned and developed *Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices*. Their time and efforts in survey development, data analysis, and writing and editing have culminated in a document that assists educators in improving the quality of instruction in elementary grade combination classes.

Annette Dashiell
Arlington County Schools

Wilma Lloyd
Loudoun County Schools

Michele Milden
Arlington County Schools

Mary Ann Peterman
Fairfax County Schools

Vanna Ruffner
Fairfax County Schools

Deborah Straniero
Fairfax County Schools (formerly)

Also essential to this product were VEA building representatives who identified grade combination teachers and the Virginia grade combination teachers who responded to the Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey (see Appendix A). The experience, perceptions, and recommendations of the teacher respondents provide useful information for Virginia educators and educators across AEL's Region.

Dr. Helen Rolfe, Instruction and Professional Development Director for the Virginia Education Association, provided important assistance in nominating study group members; arranging the printing, distribution, and collection of the survey; and in developing and editing this publication. Marjorie McCreery and the staff of the Northern Virginia UniServ office aided the group's work by making initial contacts of study group members and providing a meeting room.

Finally, AEL staff who handled meeting facilitation, study group communications, researching, developing selected publication sections, blending the writing of several authors, editing, typesetting, graphic design, and layout contributed greatly to this final product. The authors wish to thank the following AEL staff members:

Becky Burns
Pat Cahape
Mary Farley
Kim Hambrick
Jane Hange
Carolyn Luzader
Carla McClure

INTRODUCTION

AEL seeks to provide professional development opportunities to educators by working with and through their associations. Since 1985, one way that the Classroom Instruction (CI) program has assisted associations is through the creation of study groups to assist educators in conducting and using research.

A study group is composed of educators who are organized to conduct a study on an educational issue and who produce a product that is useful to their colleagues. Associations and AEL jointly select topics for study groups, although member selection is completed by associations. AEL staff participate in meetings as members of the study group and usually take a facilitative role. The Virginia Education Association's (VEA) Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) director assists in facilitating group meetings and aids in writing and reviewing sections of each VEA-AEL study group product. AEL provides a small grant to aid the work of the study group, but the in-kind contributions that the association and individual members often make far exceed AEL's grant.

The responsibility for dissemination lies with both AEL and the association. Usually AEL provides dissemination to the other three states in its Region, while the association announces and disseminates the product in its own state. AEL often provides a small grant to assist with the dissemination of the product or to sponsor opportunities for study group members to share the findings of their study at state or regional conferences.

PLANNING THE STUDY

As declining enrollments face many schools, both rural and urban, the decision to close small schools and consolidate student populations confronts parents, administrators, and teachers. However, the cost of consolidation and the extended process of gaining community approval often delay or prevent consolidation. The consolidation, as well as the recently established class size mandates restricting enrollment in the elementary grades in many states, frequently force the creation of grade combination or multigrade classes. A grade combination class is herein defined as a regular (not special) education elementary class composed of students of two or more grade levels that are assigned to one teacher.

In 1989, Virginia teachers with several years of grade combination teaching experience discussed the inherent difficulties of being accountable for the education of students in two sets of curricula in five major subjects and special subjects with the VEA IPD director, Helen Rolfe. The grade combination teachers also brought a related new business item before the VEA Delegate Assembly in April 1989. The item, which was adopted, stated:

> *The VEA will recommend that all school systems acknowledge that self-contained, grade combination classes meet special needs requirements which include aide support, reduced class size, and flexible curriculum requirements.*

Further, the difficulties of multigrade teaching were brought before the National Education Association's 1990 Representative Assembly as New Business Item #60. The item, introduced by a VEA-AEL study group member and adopted, stated:

> *The NEA shall research the impact of elementary combination classrooms upon student achievement and the possible need for guidelines to cover the placement of ability groups and class size. A status report on the research, development of guidelines, and the plan for further action on this item shall be reported to the 1991 Representative Assembly.*

Rolfe responded to the initial request for assistance to grade combination teachers by soliciting, through an article in the VEA's *Journal of Virginia Education* December 1989 issue, the interest of other Virginia grade combination teachers in the formation of a study group to investigate the issue. The VEA-AEL Grade Combination Study Group held its first meeting February 20, 1990, in Falls Church, Virginia. The six teachers in the study group, with a combined total of 74 years of grade combination teaching experience, planned a publication that would inform policymakers of the needs of grade combination or multigrade teachers and that would suggest effective strategies to these teachers.

The group determined that a survey of Virginia grade combination teachers could reveal: the extent of the practice; demographics of grade combination teaching assignments (e.g. class size, most common grade levels, number of lesson preparations, etc.); advantages and difficulties of the practice that teachers identify; teacher recommendations for state, district, or school policies that could alleviate problems; and instructional strategies survey respondents have found effective in teaching multigrade or grade combination classes.

CONDUCTING THE STUDY

At their initial meeting, study group members, with the assistance of the VEA IPD director and AEL staff, drafted the VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Locater Form and the Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey and cover letters to accompany both (see Appendices B and C). AEL staff reviewed the documents for survey design, revised, typeset, and provided camera-ready masters to the VEA IPD director. VEA staff then copied the Locater Form and cover letter and mailed these with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to each VEA building representative requesting return by March 28, 1990. As names and addresses of grade combination teachers were returned, VEA staff mailed each a copy of the group's survey with a cover letter requesting return by April 30, 1990. In addition, VEA staff mailed a reminder Grade Combination Teacher Locater Form to all building representatives, which increased response rate.

Study group members, in their second meeting May 17, 1990, reviewed the 87 completed surveys returned, discussed analysis procedures and reporting of qualitative data, and outlined product development tasks. Each study group member then analyzed responses to a cluster of the survey questions and wrote the section of the publication that summarizes commonalities across responses for each question within the cluster (see Findings of the Study). The VEA IPD director developed the section on policy recommendations and AEL staff wrote the Introduction, Rationale, Reflections and Recommendations from Study Group Members, and Bibliography and Resources sections.

During their meetings and in individual work between meetings, study group members reviewed the literature on multigrade or grade combination classes and shared these with their colleagues. Study group members peer edited all sections of the draft document

and revised their own work prior to a melding of all sections by AEL staff to form a final draft. The VEA president and IPD director, in addition to study group members and an AEL writer/editor, edited this final version of the publication and AEL staff incorporated their changes as appropriate. AEL staff then typeset the group's final work, developed announcement flyers for use by AEL and VEA, and provided camera-ready masters of the publication and flyers to VEA and AEL's Resource Center. VEA disseminates the publication upon request to Virginia educators. AEL announces the document and, upon request, provides copies at printing cost to educators in its Region.

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLICATION

Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices originated with the frustration of several grade combination teachers with the add-on responsibilities their assignments entailed. Study group members found this emotion common among their colleagues throughout the state who responded to the Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey. Yet, therapeutic sharing of widespread problems was not the goal and is not the end result of this study. Study group members intend that readers learn strategies effective in dealing with double curricula and varying child development levels. The study group also believes that the shared wisdom represented in these findings will enable grade combination teachers to cope with the considerable demands on them. In addition to providing instructional practice suggestions, the authors, who speak for the survey respondents and others with similar teaching assignments throughout Virginia, expect that *Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices* will inform policy development at the school, district, and state levels. Study group members, VEA, and AEL favor training in strategies that will allow multigrade teachers to help all students achieve academic success.

Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices can serve district and school administrators by suggesting policies and resources that aid multigrade teaching. Staff developers can find specific techniques to incorporate in workshops for multigrade teachers as well as mechanisms for organizing support groups. Teachers will note teaching strategies their multigrade teaching peers have found effective and begin to implement these. Students, ultimately, should not suffer from lack of attention to their individual needs in multigrade classes, but should benefit socially from the increased cooperation and academically from exposure to new concepts. In school, as in life, we can learn to work with others of varying age and developmental perspectives and grow from our associations.

METHODOLOGY

VEA-AEL study group members utilized survey methodology for their investigation for three purposes: to determine the extent of the practice of assigning two or more grades to one self-contained class; to describe the demographic characteristics of a typical grade combination class (if such exists); and to learn directly from the teachers of such classes their most common instructional practices, the advantages and disadvantages associated with such assignments, and their recommendations for most effective instructional and management strategies and for local, district, and state policies that could improve grade combination or multigrade teaching. Further, an analysis of the Grade Combination Teacher Locator Forms returned was used to describe the distribution of grade combination classes throughout Virginia. See Appendix D for a graphic distribution depiction and explanation.

The 21 item Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey developed by the study group contains 14 questions asking the grade combination or multigrade teacher to describe his/her current assignment, teaching behaviors, and com-

mon instructional practices. The remaining seven questions sample the respondent's perceptions of difficulties and advantages of grade combination or multigrade teaching; most frequently used instructional practices; assistance provided or needed from the school principal; beneficial professional development experiences; recommendations of needed school, division, or state policies regarding grade combination or multigrade teaching; and descriptions of strategies most effective for this type of teaching assignment.

Study group members reviewed the 87 surveys returned to VEA and analyzed the majority of responses—those of the 75 grade combination elementary teachers, the original focus of this group of teachers with similar teaching assignments. The remaining 11 responses were received from secondary or special education teachers whose multigrade teaching assignments, while difficult, are often aided by smaller class size or a single curriculum for all grades or ages enrolled in a class. Study group members determined that item analysis of survey data could best be reported within seven clusters of survey items reported in the Findings section of this document.

HELP US IMPROVE THIS PUBLICATION

Readers are requested to complete the product evaluation form included within and to fold, staple, and return it to AEL. Suggestions for revisions to the document and/or similar publications are welcome.

RATIONALE

The concept of the multigrade class– also known as grade combination, split level, mixed grade, multiage, ungraded, non-graded, vertical, and family grouping– is not new. It has its roots in the one-room school of the early days of education in the United States. Multigrade classes are defined here as the assignment of two or more grade levels of students as one teacher's instructional responsibility. Since the term **multigrade class** is the one most frequently discussed in the literature, it will be used throughout this rationale.

Current trends in demographics and economics, such as decreasing student population and rising costs of building construction and maintenance, have motivated educators to consider school reorganization and consolidation to deal with the problems of uneven student distribution, limited instructional resources, and inadequate facilities. Multigrade classes are often a result of such reorganization.

Recent research findings support multigrade grouping, indicating it can provide both cognitive and social benefits for students (e.g., Pratt & Treacy, 1986; Rule, 1983; Milburn, 1981). In response to the demands of changing demographics, particularly a decreasing and shifting student population, as well as to recent research, several state legislatures– including Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana– have called for implementation of multigrade programs. For example, the Kentucky State Legislature, in its Education Reform Act of 1990, mandated the implementation of ungraded primary programs (K-3) by September 1992; and the Mississippi State Legislature in 1990 mandated mixed-aged classrooms in elementary schools to be phased in over the next few years.

Although multigrade classes are an educational reality, and the literature reveals positive effects from this type of instructional organization, little research exists on teacher strategies for delivering instruction to two or more grades of students at one time. "Throughout its history the concept of 'non-gradedness' has been presented as an ideal to which schools may aspire rather than as a specific program which they may implement" (Slavin, 1986, p. 47). Consequently, efforts to capture the ideal have been largely unsuccessful (Miller, 1989).

EFFECTS OF MULTIGRADE CLASSES

Research indicates no negative effects on social relationships and attitudes for students in multigrade classes. In fact, in terms of affective responses, multigrade students out-perform single-grade students in more than 75 percent of the measures used (Miller, 1989, pp. 4-13). Results from several studies reviewed by Miller show positive effects of multigrade classes when measures of student attitude toward self, school, or peers are compared across a range of schools and geographic areas (Pratt & Treacy, 1986; Milburn, 1981; Schrankler, 1976; Schroeder & Nott, 1974). For example, Milburn (1981) found that children of all ages in the multigrade school had a more positive attitude toward school than did their counterparts in traditional grade-level groups. Schrankler (1976) and Milburn (1981) found multigrade students have significantly higher self-concept scores than students in single grades. A trend toward more positive social relations is indicated also (Sherman, 1984; Mycock, 1966; Chace, 1961). Sherman (1984) found that multi-

grade students felt closer to their multiage classmates than did single-grade students. Chace (1961) and Mycock (1966) determined that multigrade students had significantly better teacher-child relationships and better social development than single-grade students. These studies indicate that students in multigrade classes tend to have significantly more positive attitudes toward themselves, their peers, and school.

In terms of academic achievement, the data clearly support the multigrade class as a viable, effective organizational alternative to single-grade instruction (Miller, 1989, p. 13). Little or no difference in student achievement in the single or multigrade class was found in the studies. In a study conducted in 1983, Rule found in general that multigrade students scored higher on standardized achievement tests in reading than did single-grade students. Milburn (1981) found little difference in basic skills achievement levels between students in multigrade and grade-level groups, but multigrade classes did score significantly higher on the vocabulary sections of the reading test administered. To account for this, Milburn concluded that teachers in multigrade classes may have placed greater emphasis on oral language, or that teachers working in multigrade settings may tend to speak at a level geared to the comprehensive abilities of the older children. In all cases in Milburn's study, children in the youngest age group in the multigrade class scored higher on basic skills tests than their age-mates in single grade classes. The findings of Milburn's study suggest that multigrade classes may be of special benefit to slow learners. Such children may profit from the tendency to emulate older students. Also, if they are in the same classroom with the same teacher for more than one year, slow learners have more time to assimilate learning in a familiar environment. Furthermore, multigrade grouping enables youngsters to work at different developmental levels without obvious remediation—a situation that can cause emotional, social, or intellectual damage—and without special arrangements for acceleration (Milburn, 1981, pp. 513-514).

A number of other studies indicate that multigrade grouping can provide remedial benefits for at-risk children. For example, it has been established that children are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors (Whiting, 1983) and offer instruction (Ludeke & Hartup, 1983) to younger peers than to age-mates. Brown and Palinscar (1986) make the point that the cognitive growth stemming from interaction with peers of different levels of cognitive maturity is not simply a result of the less-informed child imitating the more knowledgeable one. The interaction between children leads the less-informed member to internalize new understandings. Along the same lines, Vygotsky (1978) maintains that internalization of new concepts takes place when children interact within the "zone of proximal development, the distance between the actual developmental level and the potential developmental level as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." Slavin (1987) suggests that the discrepancy between what an individual can do with and without assistance can be the basis for cooperative peer efforts that result in cognitive gains, and that children model in collaborating groups behaviors more advanced than those they could perform as individuals. Brown and Reeve (1985) maintain that instruction aimed at a wide range of abilities allows novices to learn at their own rate and to manage various cognitive challenges in the presence of "experts."

OBSTACLES TO MULTIGRADE INSTRUCTIONAL ORGANIZATION

In view of the advantages to multigrade instruction cited in the literature, the reader may wonder why more schools have not been organized into multigrade classes. One response is **tradition**. Although schools of the 1800s were nongraded, with the beginning of the industrial revolution and large scale urban growth, the practice of graded schools was established as the norm for organizing and classifying students. Educators found it easier to manage increased numbers of students by organizing them into

grades or age divisions. Other factors, such as the advent of graded textbooks, state supported education, and the demand for trained teachers, have further solidified graded school organization. The graded school system was largely a response to a need for managing large numbers of students rather than an effort to meet individual student needs (Goodlad & Anderson, 1963).

Although the graded school developed as a result of demographics and economics, it has become the predominant way educators and parents think about schools. Ironically, changes in demographics and economics are now necessitating different school organizational patterns. However, the expectations created by the norm of graded schools have created a handicap for anyone seeking to operate a multigrade school (Miller, 1989). Also, most teachers receive training for teaching single-grade classes organized around whole-class instruction and/or small ability-grouped instruction, which are characterized by low student diversity. Different and more complex skills in classroom management and discipline, classroom organization, instructional organization and curriculum, instructional delivery and grouping, self-directed learning, and peer tutoring are needed to deliver instruction successfully in a multigrade class (Miller, 1989). Lack of attention to these skills in teacher education programs is a problem to teachers who are assigned multigrade classes (Miller, 1988; Horn, 1983; Jones, 1987; Bandy & Gleadow, 1980). Too frequently, the teacher skill deficit and the need to develop community understanding and support of multigrade instruction are overlooked by administrators or policymakers when decisions to implement multigrade classes are made and teacher assignments to these classes are given.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's (NWREL) Rural Education Program recognized the need for material to assist the multigrade teacher in 1987 when concerns were raised about the availability of research and training materials to help rural, multigrade teachers improve their skills. As a result, the Rural Education Program developed a handbook which contains a comprehensive review of the research on multigrade instruction, key issues teachers face in a multigrade setting, and resource guides to assist multigrade teachers in improving the quality of instruction. Twenty-one multigrade teachers reviewed a draft of this handbook and provided feedback, strategies, and ideas which were incorporated into the final version completed in September 1989. *The Multigrade Teacher: A Resource Handbook For Small, Rural Schools* by Bruce A. Miller has been of benefit to the VEA-AEL Study Group in preparing its study. Particularly helpful were the bibliographies and the overview of current research on the effects of multigrade instruction on student and teacher performance.

Teaching a multigrade class is a demanding task requiring a special type of individual. It also requires training, communication with parents and community members, and support. *Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices* suggests types of training, resources, and support that facilitate multigrade instruction; effective strategies and practices employed by teachers experienced in multigrade class instruction; and state and local policy initiatives that can support and assist teachers in multigrade class settings. The teachers who prepared this study, as well as those who responded to the study group's survey, have experience teaching multigrade classes. Their suggestions can be valuable to novice teachers in the multigrade approach, to administrators who are reorganizing schools, to those who plan professional development activities, and to those who recommend or initiate educational policy.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Study group members clustered responses from 75 Virginia teacher respondents to the Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey for analysis of frequency of responses and for commonalities emerging from the data. The purposes and methods of survey analysis are described in the Methodology section. The survey is included as Appendix C. The following clusters were based upon question similarities:

Questions 1, 4, 5, 6
Teacher Experience Characteristics

Questions 2, 3, 7, 8, 9
Class and School Characteristics

Questions 10, 11, 14, 17
Curriculum and Instructional Strategies Employed

Questions 15, 16
Perceived Advantages and Difficulties of Grade Combination Teaching

Questions 12, 13, 18, 19
Perceived Assistance Sources and Resources

Question 20
Policy Recommendations

Question 21
Effective Instructional and Classroom Management Strategies

The following subsections discuss the findings within the above clusters. The questions for each cluster are included here in abbreviated form for reference (see Appendix C for the complete survey).

TEACHER EXPERIENCE CHARACTERISTICS

This topic examines data gathered in response to questions 1, 4, 5, and 6 of the survey relating to teacher experience. Responses provided information on total years of experience in grade combination teaching, continuity of grade combination teaching, assignment of grade combination classes, and total years teaching experience.

1. Are you currently teaching a grade combination class?

4. Have you taught grade combination classes in the past? If so, please indicate your years of grade combination teaching experience. How many total years of teaching experience do you have?

5. Have you requested grade combination class teaching assignments or were you assigned a combined class?

6. Have you taught combination classes in consecutive years?

All 75 teachers responding to the survey were currently teaching grade combination classes. Eighty-two percent of the respondents reported they previously had taught a grade combination class. Seventy-five percent of those teachers who had taught a grade combination class in the past indi-

cated they had between one and six years grade combination teaching experience. Seven percent had seven to nine years of grade combination teaching experience, and 18 percent had taught grade combination classes for 10 or more years.

In reporting total years of teaching experience, the largest number of respondents (41 percent) indicated 16 or more years experience. The next highest category in years of teaching experience was 11 to 15 years (22 percent), followed by six to 10 years (19 percent), and one to five years (18 percent).

The majority of teachers responding had been assigned grade combination classes. Eighteen teachers (24 percent) reported they had requested a combined class. One teacher explained that school assignments were altered each year so a teacher would not be assigned a combined class in consecutive years. Analysis of the data from question 6 revealed, however, that a majority of respondents had taught combination classes in consecutive years.

A summary of teacher experience characteristics indicates that the "typical" survey respondent was a veteran teacher who had two or more years experience teaching grade combination classes. A majority of the teachers had taught grade combination classes in consecutive years, and in most cases these classes had been assigned.

CLASS AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Questions 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9 report data on class and school settings for grade combination teachers who responded. Responses provided descriptions of school and class size, grades most frequently combined, when grade combination classes were assigned, and composition of grade combination classes.

2. If you are currently teaching a grade combination class, what grades are combined in your class?

3. What is the approximate student enrollment of your school?

7. How many students are enrolled in your combination class?

8. What percentage of your students are served by "pull-out" programs?

9. Was your 1989-90 class a grade combination class from the first day of school? If no, in what month did it become a grade combination class?

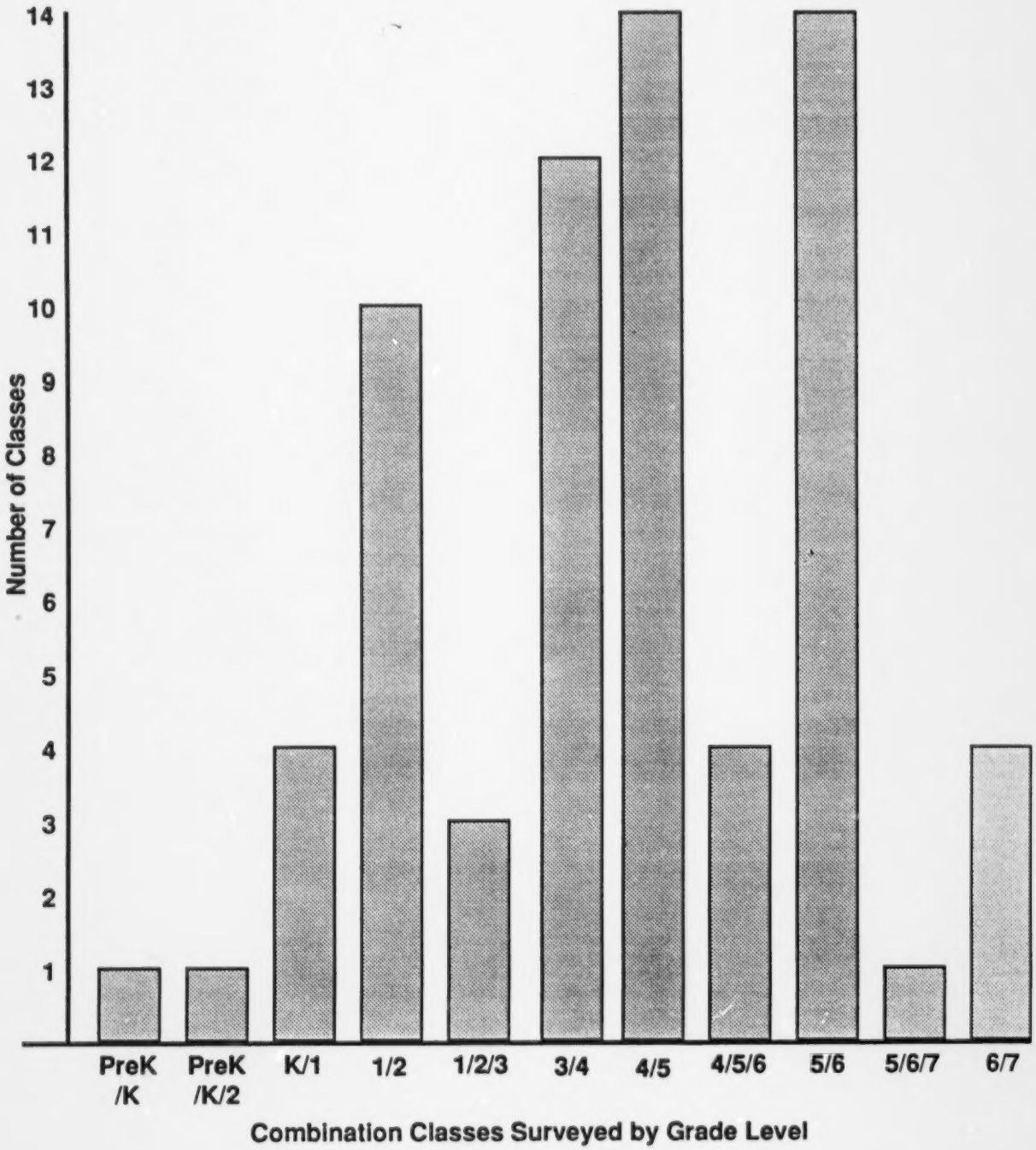
Cited as the most frequently included grade in a combined class was grade five. Eighteen percent of the teachers were currently teaching a combined fourth/fifth grade class, and another 18 percent were teaching a combined fifth/sixth grade class. The next most frequently combined grades were third/fourth (16 percent), followed by first/second (13 percent), and second/third (eight percent). A small number of teachers (five percent) taught a kindergarten/first grade combination or a sixth/seventh combination. One teacher reported teaching a prekindergarten/kindergarten class. Figure 1 depicts the frequency of combined grades.

Nine teachers indicated they were teaching combined classes with three grade levels. Four of these teachers taught fourth/fifth/sixth; three taught first/second/third; one taught fifth/sixth/seventh; and another taught pre-kindergarten/kindergarten/second grade.

Ninety-six percent of these classes were in place on the first day of school. However, four percent of the respondents stated that their classes became grade combinations later in the school year, some as late as December or January.

Survey data indicated that grade combination classes were most frequently found in smaller schools (300 or fewer students). Thirty-three percent of the respondents reported teaching in schools with fewer than 100 students. Twenty-six percent reported teaching in schools with enrollments between 101 and 300. Conversely, 29 percent

Figure 1. What Grades are Most Frequently Combined?



reported their school enrollment was between 301 and 600, and only eight percent of the respondents taught in schools with a student enrollment greater than 600.

Of the 75 teachers reporting, 67 percent had between 16 and 25 students enrolled in their combined classes. Second most frequently reported class size was between 26 and 30. Thirteen percent of the teachers had fewer than 15 students, while only three percent had more than 30 students.

Diversity in class composition was evident in many of the responses. Fifty-two percent of the classes described included students that received Learning Disability (LD) resource services, while 47 percent contained children that were Chapter 1 served or qualified. Limited English proficiency students were placed in 12 percent of the combination classes, and nine percent of the classes surveyed had Emotionally Disturbed (ED) and LD self-contained students. A few teachers indicated that their combination classes included severely language impaired students, Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) students, blind students, or autistic and physically handicapped students.

Forty-two percent of the respondents were teaching combination classes with two or more of these "special" groups of children represented. For example, in one class there were five Chapter 1 students, three learning disabled students, one severely language impaired student, and one student with limited English proficiency. Another 42 percent of the teachers surveyed described classes composed of students with a wide variety of learning styles and individual needs to be met.

In addition, two-thirds of the grade combination teachers reported that at least five percent of their students were served by "pull-out" programs, and approximately one-fourth of these teachers indicated that more than half of their students were pulled from their classrooms for various programs.

Summary of the data on class/school settings provides a picture of the "typical" instructional environment for teachers who responded to the survey. Most frequently, grade combination classes existed in small schools (total enrollment under 300). Generally, the grouping originated at the beginning of the school year and combined two consecutive grades between grade two and grade six. Average grade combination class size ranged from 16 to 25 students, many of whom were served by special programs such as LD or Chapter 1. Diversity of needs and learning styles, as well as frequent movement of students in and out of the classroom for special programs, were characteristic of the typical grade combination class described in this survey.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

The questions in this cluster focused on four concerns: having two or more preparations for basic subjects, having to prepare lessons for enrichment or supplemental programs, handling field trips, and identifying instructional methods found to be effective in teaching grade combination classes. An abbreviated version of the questions is included below followed by survey findings relating to this cluster. The complete questions can be found in Appendix C.

10. For which basic subjects do you have two or more preparations?

11. For which enrichment or supplemental subjects do you also prepare lessons?

14. Do you take your class on field trips or send students on grade-assigned field trips?

17. Which instructional methods have you found to be effective in teaching a grade combination class? Please rank the frequency with which you use each of these instructional methods.

Survey findings indicate that basic skills subjects most frequently required double preparations in grade combination classes.

Most respondents cited reading (87 percent) and math (86 percent) as subjects requiring two or more preparations. Spelling (79 percent) was next in frequency of response. More than half of the teachers also reported double preparations in science (64 percent), social studies (62 percent), health (58 percent), handwriting (55 percent), and English mechanics (54 percent). Additionally, 45 percent of the respondents mentioned double preparations for family life and English composition/developmental writing.

Additionally, respondents reported preparing lessons for enrichment or supplemental subjects. Survey data indicated that 49 percent of the teachers prepared lessons for art. One teacher noted that art was integrated with social studies and English. Approximately one-third of the respondents reported preparing lessons for physical education, and one-fourth of the teachers stated that they prepared gifted and talented enrichment lessons. Only eight percent of the teachers reported preparing lessons for music, and no respondents mentioned foreign language as an additional preparation. Other preparations identified by survey respondents included: whole language arts, Quest Program for grades six and seven, human growth and development for grades five and six, At-Risk Program, remedial reading, computer, social skills, and minority achievement math.

Most grade combination teachers responding to the survey reported arranging field trips for their students. Fifty-seven percent indicated they took their own class on field trips, while 28 percent of the respondents both took their own class and also sent students on grade assigned trips. One teacher commented, "Whenever possible. Regular education teachers won't always take Emotionally Disturbed students." Another 14 percent of the respondents reported only sending students on grade-assigned field trips, while eight percent indicated they neither took their students nor sent them with other groups on field trips.

In responses to question 17 regarding instructional methods that grade combination teachers found effective, integrating the curriculum and peer tutoring were the most frequently mentioned strategies. Eighty-two percent of the respondents reported employing these two methods in their classes. Of those who used peer tutoring, approximately one-half used within-grade peer tutoring, while the other one-half employed cross-age tutoring. Cooperative learning was the next most frequently mentioned method (62 percent), and 39 percent of the teachers indicated team teaching as an effective instructional method in grade combination classes.

The following additional effective grade combination teaching strategies were provided by respondents:

- ✓ utilizing parent volunteers;
- ✓ departmentalizing instruction;
- ✓ implementing whole group instruction;
- ✓ being organized;
- ✓ being flexible (especially with grouping between grades);
- ✓ utilizing a fulltime instructional aide; and
- ✓ networking with other educators.

In addition to rating effectiveness of teaching strategies, respondents were asked to rank the frequency of their use of these strategies from one (most frequently used) to five (least frequently used). Interestingly enough, the methods that were reported to be most effective were also the same methods that were used most frequently. Based on the number of respondents who ranked a particular strategy one or two, integrating the curriculum ranked first in frequency of use (64 percent). The second most frequently used instructional method was peer tutoring (51 percent), followed by cooperative learning (44 percent) and team teaching (21 percent).

PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES AND DIFFICULTIES OF GRADE COMBINATION TEACHING

In addition to identifying experience characteristics of grade combination teachers, the survey was designed to assess respondent perceptions of grade combination teaching. Perceived advantages and difficulties were recorded in response to questions 15 and 16 of the survey. Following the questions is a description of respondent data.

15. Please describe any difficulties you have experienced in teaching curricula of two grade levels.

16. Please describe advantages you perceive to teaching grade combination classes.

DIFFICULTIES

The consensus on difficulties experienced by 83 percent of the respondents can be capsulized in the response "**double** planning, **double** teaching, **double** grading, and **double** record keeping." These teachers cited specific difficulties indicating, as one teacher stated, "The time factor is most critical—time in terms of covering materials with students." The individual difficulties reported by teachers that relate to the "time factor" in daily class instruction in order of frequency are as follows:

- lack of class time for instruction of two grade levels (71%);
- insufficient planning time (62%);
- not enough time for teachers to master two curricula in preparation to teach (48%);
- insufficient time to effectively cover two sets of curricula (45%);
- never caught up on written work (38%);
- insufficient time to remediate or work on a one-to-one basis with a child (24%); and
- inability to go beyond basics (e.g., not enough time for science experiments) (7%).

After time, the next most frequently cited difficulties, identified by 38 percent of the respondents, were fragmentation, scheduling, and grouping. Several responses illustrate these perceived difficulties. Two teachers indicated scheduling problems were related to the number of pull-out programs. Science and social studies were specific areas mentioned as difficult to schedule. Two teachers noted that in subjects such as family life, health, and sex education, the curriculum for one grade is not appropriate for the other grade. Therefore, teachers must "farm out" children before they can teach certain lessons. Three other teachers said they could not arrange field trips because the subject would not be appropriate for both grade levels.

The third most frequently experienced difficulty in teaching curricula of two grade levels was the inability of one group of children to work independently while the teacher instructed the other group (20 percent). For example, one teacher stated there was constant competition between the groups for the teacher's time, and another described problems with children who fit in no group. However, three teachers identified problems related to scheduling for team teaching and working with teachers who they felt were uncooperative.

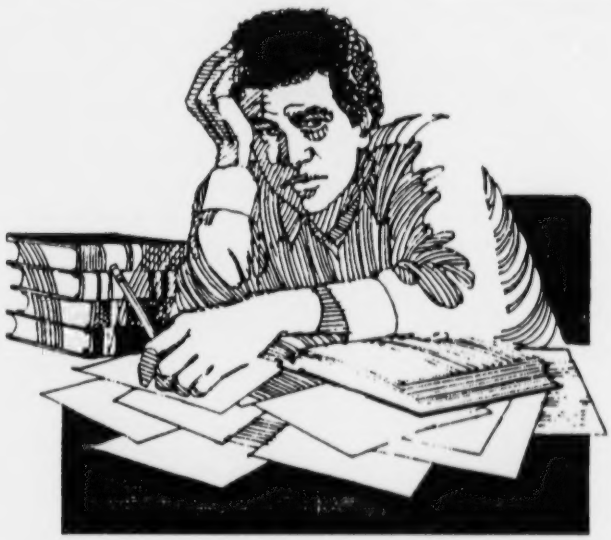
Respondents also identified difficulties related to how children were placed in combination classes. Concerns about how children were placed in grade combination classes were raised by six teachers who specified that class size was too large; children were inappropriately added during the year; children felt isolated from others in their grade, thus their self-esteem suffered; and children with special needs such as English as a Second Language students were inappropriately placed in combination classes.

Finally, 11 teachers described difficulties related to supports and resources. Three respondents specified a lack of support from

Difficulties

Lack of class time for instruction of two grade levels

Insufficient time to remediate or work on a one-to-one basis with a child



Insufficient planning time

Never caught up on written work

Insufficient time to effectively cover two sets of curricula

Constant competition between the groups for the teacher's time

Double planning, double teaching, double grading, and double record keeping

their principal, and four mentioned concern about the amount of public relations work required to gain parental support. Two teachers mentioned a lack of support and assistance in general, and two responses described insufficient resources and materials to teach and to integrate two curriculum levels.

ADVANTAGES

In describing advantages to teaching grade combination classes, the consensus of 26 percent of the 69 teachers who responded to this question was that peer tutoring is the greatest benefit. In contrast to a perceived disadvantage mentioned by one teacher, 14 percent of the teachers who responded to this question stated that having the children two consecutive years allowed them the advantages of knowing the children's strengths and weaknesses and of being able to group ahead of time. One teacher responded, "Keeping students for a second year is great—no lost time!"

Integration of language arts and other curricula was identified as an advantage by 14 percent of the teachers. Six of these 10 responses specified the particular benefit combination classes had to integrating the reading curricula.

Respondents perceived a wide variety of other advantages. However, each was mentioned by only one or two persons. These advantages are categorized below under the headings of grouping, academic, behavioral, and resource and support advantages.

Grouping advantages:
- Children are always taught in small groups.
- Gifted and talented programs, differentiation, and general grouping are no problem.
- Class size is always smaller.
- You get the top notch students academically and no behavior problems.
- All children can read.

Academic advantages:
- Upper grade can review what is taught to the lower grade.
- One group motivates the other group.
- Children in the lower grade get enrichment by listening to what is taught to the upper group.
- Children in the lower grade are better prepared for the next year.

Behavioral advantages:
- Different ages learn to socialize.
- Teacher can observe nine- and 10-year-olds interacting.
- More independent work habits are developed.
- Upper grade children act as role models for lower grade children.

Resource and support advantages:
- I received an extra computer for my room.
- Help from an aide was provided.

Although 24 percent of the 69 teachers who answered this question responded negatively with "no advantages," one teacher noted, "Kids learn from kids. I use students to help other students with word recognition, spelling, math, etc." However, this teacher went on to say, "This isn't really an advantage because this could be done in a one-grade class." Another respondent stated, "After 12 years of teaching combination grades, I can see no advantages. Because of time limitations, you cannot reach all students and meet their needs. They become angry and 'turned off.' Teachers are left frustrated and emotionally and physically drained."

In summary, a diversity of difficulties and advantages to grade combination classes were perceived by survey respondents. Difficulties identified by respondents in teaching curricula of two grade levels fall into five categories: time, scheduling/grouping, children's inability to work independently, student placement, and supports/resources. Teachers cited specific difficulties, most notably lack of planning and

Advantages

Integration of language arts and other curricula

Upper grade can review what is taught to the lower grade

Different ages learn to socialize

Peer tutoring—kids learn from kids

Upper grade children act as role models for lower grade children

More independent work habits are developed

Children in the lower grade get enrichment by listening to what is taught to the upper group

instructional time, relating to the most frequently identified problem—time. In contrast, a number of advantages to grade combination classes were identified, most frequently peer tutoring. Moreover, problems cited by some respondents were perceived as advantages by others, although there was greater consensus on specific difficulties. For example, 83 percent of the respondents identified "double planning, teaching, grading, and record keeping" as a difficulty, while 14 percent identified curriculum integration as an advantage. Also, some teachers indicated grouping was a problem, while others perceived grouping as an advantage to grade combination classes. Although they also may have identified difficulties, a majority of the respondents perceived some advantages to teaching grade combination classes.

PERCEIVED ASSISTANCE SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Although supports/resources were a "problem" category identified by survey respondents, grade combination teachers also described ways and means by which their teaching was supported. Questions 12, 13, 18, and 19 on the VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey deal with helps and resources that teachers have available and utilize when teaching a grade combination class.

12. Who helps you teach? Indicate any person who assists your instruction in some way.

13. What resources do you use frequently in instruction?

18. Does your school principal assist your work? If so, please describe how. If not, please suggest ways a principal could assist.

19. What professional development experiences have helped you in teaching a combination grade class?

In response to question 12, 37 percent of the respondents, the largest percentage cited, reported receiving help in teaching from the school librarian. The second largest category of responses, halftime instructional aides, were listed by 28 percent of the respondents. Almost half (48 percent) of those teachers who cited halftime instructional aides as helpers are assisted by those aides five days per week. However, the amount of aide time varied from one-half hour to five hours per day. Specialists such as music, art, and physical education teachers and counselors comprised the next largest group of responses (25 percent). Parent volunteers were reported as instructional assistants by 20 percent of the teachers, and team teachers were mentioned in 16 percent of the responses. A small percentage of respondents cited student teacher, principal, curriculum specialist, or fulltime instructional aide as an instructional assistant. Additionally, 21 percent of the survey respondents did not indicate any person as an instructional assistant.

In indicating resources used in instruction, 89 percent of the respondents reported that teachers' manuals for each subject and grade level were their most frequently used resources. Other resources cited in order of frequency of response were: supplemental instructional materials for each grade, audiovisual equipment, personal computers, math manipulatives, classroom space which allows for grouping, science kits, learning centers, and math kits.

Seventy-four percent of the survey respondents replied to question 18, "Does your principal assist your work?" Of those responding, 57 percent indicated that their principal did not assist them in their work. However, respondents made numerous suggestions as to how principals might assist grade combination teachers. A review of all such suggestions revealed the following most

frequently described ways principals could assist:

- careful selection of students for a grade combination class;
- more support with discipline;
- flexible scheduling;
- team teaching;
- more instructional materials; and
- encouragement and support.

Forty-three percent of the teachers responding to this question answered that their principals did assist them in their work. Following are the most frequently cited ways in which grade combination teachers reported being assisted by their principals:

- making helpful suggestions and giving support;
- assigning aide time;
- helping to teach;
- choosing students for the class carefully;
- limiting number of students in the class and number of reading groups;
- giving teacher control over curriculum taught; and
- supplying extra materials for the classroom.

Several types of professional development experiences were cited as helpful to the grade combination teachers who responded to question 19. Professional reading was most frequently mentioned (38 percent), followed by inservice education sessions (26 percent), peer observation (21 percent), teacher support group or network (18 percent), educator association conferences (nine percent), and mentor (eight percent). "On the job training" and "experience in teaching a wide range of grade levels" were most frequently described by eight of the 12 respondents to the "other experiences" category.

In conclusion, data from this cluster of questions indicated that resources are available to support teaching grade combination classes. Frequently utilized supports for teachers who responded to the survey can be placed in three categories: human resources, instructional materials, and professional experiences. A majority of the respondents reported receiving instructional assistance from at least one other person, using instructional resources such as teachers' manuals and supplementary instructional materials, and being assisted by a variety of professional development experiences. It would seem that grade combination teachers seek and utilize resources to enrich their teaching.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to question 20, survey respondents were asked to recommend school, division, or state policies to govern teaching grade combination classes. This subsection of the survey findings should be particularly useful to those who recommend or initiate educational policy.

20. Please suggest any school, division, or state policies which would make teaching grade combination classes more effective for students and desirable for teachers.

Fifty-one teachers (68 percent) responded to this survey item. They suggested that policies for grade combination classes should deal with student, teacher, and curriculum issues. Some persons responded that there should be a policy of discouraging the practice of combination classes.

Student issues:

The most pressing policy issues reported that related to students were class size and the type of student placed in grade combination classes. Twelve teachers (24 percent) said that combination classes should be kept small. Two teachers made specific suggestions for limits on class size: "less than 15"; "20 is more than enough." Another said that there should be a limit on the number of special education students. One teacher said there should be a limit on the number of students, noting, "My class is the biggest one in our whole school!"

Eleven teachers (22 percent) commented about a policy to designate the kind of student who would be selected for participation in combination classes. There was little consensus, however, on what the guidelines need to be. The following were some suggestions:

- high achievers, or average or above in ability;
- students grouped according to subject or reading levels;
- students capable of working well independently;
- students with good work/study/listening skills; and
- students who can work well in a combination class.

Grouping high achievers of one grade and low achievers of the other was reported "not a good working possibility!" Another teacher said, "I don't feel my situation is that good because I have the lowest kids from two grade levels."

Another teacher suggested that combinations be set up first with the right combination of students put together in the groups, rather than at the end with "all the 'leftovers'."

It was suggested that within the combination class retained students who advanced to grade level work should be allowed to move ahead to the higher grade level at the teacher's discretion.

Which grades to be combined was the topic of four comments. "It is not a wise idea to group lower and upper grade students," said one person. Combining grades five and six was not good either, observed another. "Sixth graders feel isolated from all sixth grade classes, and fifth graders are intimidated."

"K through 3 and 1-2 combinations seem to work better," commented a teacher.

One teacher offered the suggestion that a "tracking system to examine students' progress through junior high school would offer much needed feedback."

Teacher issues:

Not surprisingly, there were more comments offered for policies that related to teachers. The assistance of an instructional aide, more pay, and planning time were the most common themes.

Of the thirteen specific references (26 percent) to the services of an instructional aide, there were five that spoke for a fulltime aide, three that mentioned halftime, and seven that addressed having an aide an unspecified amount of time. There was little ambiguity in the comments: "Teachers with combination classes should have fulltime or parttime aides no matter what the class size, especially in the primary grades," said one teacher.

Ten teachers (20 percent) said the compensation should be higher for teaching combination classes. One suggested that these teachers receive "monetary rewards of $1,000 extra a year, or maybe extra personal days." Another said double pay would be appropriate, "since two jobs are actually being done."

It would be helpful for combination teachers to have more planning time, said eight teachers (16 percent). "Daily unencumbered planning period of at least an hour," suggested one. "We get a planning period during music and library, but not every day," she explained.

There were other suggestions of policies to ameliorate teaching grade combination problems.

- Limit the number of years a teacher could be assigned combinations, and prohibit successive years;
- Give the teacher a more flexible schedule;
- Have more reading materials available on combination classes and their implementation; and
- Develop a network for teachers in similar situations and hold an annual conference for them.

Curriculum issues:

There were several suggestions for policies on how to adjust the curriculum to assist with combination classes. Two teach-

ers said that team teaching helped, because, as one put it,"there were not so many lessons for one person to prepare."

"Curriculum objectives should be flexible for these classes," said one teacher. "Instead of dictating content by grade level, i.e., U.S. history at grade five, curriculum should be looked at more as a concept development process," commented another.

Combining subjects like science and social studies so that the grades could be taught together was another suggestion. Supplementary materials should be used for combination classes, "so they won't have the same material again" the next year. "Each grade should have its own separate music, physical education, and library classes," said another.

Policy prohibiting the practice: Nine respondents (18 percent) said that combination classes should be eliminated. Two offered the suggestion of consolidating small schools as a way of eliminating combinations.

There were several responses that did not directly relate to the issue of policy, but indicated the respondents' attitudes. Two were negative in tone. "Double work for the teacher. No increase in pay," jotted one teacher. Another commented: "I do not feel these classes are effective. I feel very uneasy about my older group, but confident that my younger group has done well. I don't think that policy would help."

The last response was more positive: "There are a lot of combination grades taught in our school system, and not all teachers like it. Further input should be obtained from these teachers, since I don't really have a big problem with teaching two grades."

In summary, responses to question 20 indicated a diversity of opinion about appropriate policies for grade combination teaching. There was little consensus in the responses except that teachers should have more control over how classes are organized and assigned, which students are placed in them, what curriculum is taught, and how teachers of grade combination classes are supported in their efforts.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This subsection reports information gathered in response to question 21 of the "VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey." The additional instructional strategies provided by respondents are included to assist educators in making grade combination classes more effective and desirable for students and teachers. The survey question is included below for reference.

21. Please describe practices or strategies you have found effective for various teaching situations.

Sixty-one percent of the survey respondents completed this question and described a total of 102 strategies they had found effective in teaching grade combination classes. To analyze and report the data, these responses are grouped into the following six categories listed in order of frequency of response: classroom management, time management, grouping, parent relationships, getting started, and socialization.

Approximately 65 percent of the responses indicated that teachers perceived good classroom management as essential in teaching a grade combination class. Data revealed that management practices that are effective in single-grade classes may be similarly applied in grade combination classes. Practical, yet diverse, classroom management strategies provided by respondents include the following: (Numbers in parentheses indicate frequency of responses.)

- Keep one group involved with meaningful, individualized work while the teacher works with the other group (4);
- Make academic/behavioral expectations clear and consistent (4);
- Promote a sense of oneness or unity among all students in the class (3);

- Provide rewards (e.g., extra field trips, coupons to the school store, frequent breaks, etc.) (3);
- Design seating patterns that mix grades and are conducive to optimum learning (2);
- Have board/desk assignments ready for students to begin upon arrival in the morning (2);
- Select compatible students for peer tutoring and cooperative learning groups (2); and
- Model a positive attitude toward others, the school, and the classroom setting (1).

Time management, a common concern in all grade combination settings, ranked second in frequency of responses (54 percent). Three strategies were most frequently mentioned by the teachers as effective methods for handling the time management factor: integrate content and activities for both grades whenever possible (13 percent); provide independent learning activities for one group while delivering instruction to the other group (6 percent); and grade work in class and give immediate feedback when feasible (4 percent).

Thirty-three percent of the respondents addressed grouping practices and agreed that grouping is essential in meeting the diverse needs of individual students. Five educators indicated a preference for homogeneous grouping by ability or performance level. One teacher commented, "I teach all day as if I'm having reading groups." Two respondents recommended that the older students in the class be "cooperative, independent, average to high level achievers." One teacher said it was also desirable that the younger students be "cooperative, yet lower level achievers whose skills will not surpass those of their older classmates." Another respondent stated that having high level achievers eliminated the necessity for more groups than the teacher could handle. Four of the teachers suggested cross-grade or grade-level peer tutoring. Following are their grouping strategies:

- Use upper grade students to assist younger students;
- Let one child be a 'teacher' for *Weekly Reader* for his/her grade level;
- Use second grades to work with first graders on math that requires reading; and
- Use average first graders to work with slower second graders on work recognition, reading, and spelling.

Finally, the use of instructional aides or parent volunteers to work with groups was mentioned by four teachers.

The next category of responses indicated that approximately 30 percent of the educators reported that a good parent-teacher relationship was a "must" in grade combination settings. Although a few teachers mentioned their concerns regarding parent reservations and negativity to such classes, 93 percent of the comments referred to positive parent teacher interactions. Fifty percent of these responses related to establishing and maintaining good communication between teacher and parents. Following are some specific suggestions for effective communication:

- Have a parent meeting before school begins to explain the grade combination class (3);
- Call parents frequently and send home progress reports and student work periodically (3); and
- Clarify to parents that specific grade level material will be provided to all students (1).

Thirty-six percent of the responses to this question recommended involving parents in the classroom. Teachers indicated that using parents as tutors or classroom aides and developing a regular schedule for their participation in the classroom were effective ways to promote good parent relationships, as well as to improve student achievement.

Finally, one respondent stated her philosophy for developing good parent relationships: "Always have a positive attitude (showing) that you can do a good job and that the grade combination class will work."

Responses from approximately 20 percent of the teachers surveyed related to ways of "getting started" with a grade combination class and addressed two areas: 1) what to do before implementing the grade combination class; and 2) how to "get started" in the classroom with students. The following practices were reported as effective before implementation:

- Students placed in the grade combination class should be independent workers (2);
- Place only average to top ability level students in grade combination classes (2);
- Simplify the process by having students for two years who know your teaching style, methods, etc. (1); and
- Visit and observe other grade combination classes.

In suggesting strategies for how to get started with students, two teachers mentioned the importance of setting behavioral guidelines and being consistent with behavioral expectations. Also, two teachers reported that having assignments on the chalk board or on students' desks at the beginning of the school day was an effective strategy for "getting started." Two teachers suggested beginning the day with an "across the grades" assignment. A final strategy suggested in this category provides good advice for all teachers: "Be flexible; love teaching and children!"

The final category of responses on recommended effective instructional strategies was socialization. Approximately 20 percent of the respondents mentioned effective strategies for promoting socialization, indicating they perceived socialization as valuable and necessary for students' social development as individuals and as a group. All responses illustrated the need to establish a "family bonding" attitude in a grade combination setting. "Promote a sense of class unity," and "together we make a team" were single responses indicative of the strategies reported. Four respondents to this question (44 percent) showed opposition to competition between grades in a grade combination class in recommending practices such as "treat them as one class," and "involve both regular and Chapter 1 students in reading stories and reviewing math." Mixed seating arrangements; whole class experiences incorporated into lessons; an impartial behavior management system; and planned, regular contact with other classes were effective practices reported by individual respondents.

A brief summary of this subsection (question 21) of the survey findings may be stated in the combined recommendations of several respondents: "Be positive; be prepared; be flexible; be consistent!"

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

The VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey, developed by study group members, was designed to solicit data regarding teaching experience, school and classroom settings, perceived advantages and difficulties, effective teaching strategies, and recommended policy initiatives from experienced grade combination teachers. Findings on the experience and perceptions of 75 Virginia grade combination teachers who responded to the survey have been reported in this study. Further, the experience of the authors should contribute to the wisdom of their product. The Virginia teachers who participated in this study group have a combined total of 74 years teaching experience and 23 years grade combination teaching experience. Their reflections and personal comments provide additional assistance and insight to novice grade combination teachers, administrators, and those who recommend or initiate educational policy. Many of the recommendations made by study group members reinforce those offered by survey respondents; others expand and enrich survey findings.

Study group members were asked to provide additional classroom management/instructional strategies they had found effective in teaching grade combination classes. Their recommendations were largely concerned with curriculum and instructional delivery methods.

In relation to curriculum, study group members recommended integrating subject areas and grade levels. One teacher said, "Each day I provide opportunities for both grades to interact academically and socially." Another teacher suggested that art, music, and physical education were particularly appropriate for whole class instruction.

Various instructional delivery methods were recommended by study group members. Greater emphasis on oral discussion, cooperative learning activities, homogeneous grouping, whole-class and grade-level field trips, integrated seating arrangements with classroom space for small group instruction, extended use of instructional aides, and team teaching were suggested. One teacher also added, "Provide one-to-one time each day for the teacher to work with individual students"; while another advised, "Be flexible, yet organized, with instructional activities."

Finally, one teacher offered her strategy for establishing effective communication with students and parents: "Have students keep a notebook of daily assignments which both teacher and parent sign daily. Also, add positive comments on student work and request that parents respond to their children's work with comments or questions written to the teacher."

Grade Combination Study Group members were also asked to suggest policies that would enhance and facilitate grade combination teaching. The most frequently recommended policies were related to teacher empowerment. The following comments were offered by study group members:

> Allow teachers to volunteer to teach grade combination classes rather than make arbitrary assignments.
>
> Place limits on the number of consecutive years a teacher may be assigned a grade combination class unless the teacher requests a continued assignment.
>
> Give teachers greater input into class size, student placement, and schedul-

ing. (Two teachers suggested a pupil-teacher ratio of 18:1.)

Allow teachers more flexibility in developing and integrating curricula.

The teachers recommended additional policies that would improve the teaching/learning environment in grade combination classes.

Grade combination classes should be formed only for academic reasons by school choice, not required because of enrollment. Consolidating smaller schools would eliminate the need for combined classes.

Provide more planning time for grade combination teachers.

Develop a clear rationale/guidelines for student placement in grade combination classes.

Provide inservice training on teaching grade combination classes to all educators, including substitute teachers.

One teacher suggested a monetary, retroactive bonus for grade combination teachers; another reflected, "more money doesn't change difficult teaching conditions."

The reflections offered by study group members provide important considerations for administrators and teachers as they organize and implement grade combination classes. The experiences, perceptions, and recommendations of these teachers and of survey respondents indicate their recognition of the obstacles encountered in grade combination teaching; their successful practices for overcoming problems; and their awareness of the continuing need for careful planning, appropriate training, and enhanced teacher involvement in decisionmaking for grade combination instruction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adair, J. H. (1978). An attitude and achievement comparison between kindergarten and first grade children in multi and single grade classes. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 39*, 659A-660A.

Adams, J. J. (1953). Achievement and social adjustment of pupils in combination class enrolling pupils of more than one grade level. *Journal of Educational Research, 47*, 151-55.

Ames, C. (1984). Goal structures and motivation. *The Elementary School Journal, 85*(1), 39-52.

Bandy, H., & Gleadow, N. (1980). *The identification of skills and characteristics needed by country school teachers.* Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria.

Barker, B. (1986). Teachers in the nation's surviving one-room schools. *Contemporary Education, 57*(3), 148-150.

Berliner, D. (January 1988). Peer tutoring: A new look at popular practice. *Instructor*, 14-15.

Bierman, K. & Furman, W. (1981). Effects of role and assignment rationale on attitudes formed during peer tutoring. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 73*, 33-40.

Bossert, S. T. (1979). *Tasks and social relationships in classrooms.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Bossert, S. T., Barnett, B. G., & Filby, N. N. (1984). Grouping and instructional organization. In Good & Marshall, *The social context of instruction* (pp. 39-51). University of Wisconsin.

Brown, A. L., & Palinscar, A. (1986). *Guided cooperative learning and individual knowledge acquisition* (Technical Report No. 372). Champaign, IL: Center for the Study of Reading.

Brown, A. L., & Reeve, R. A. (1985). *Bandwidths of competence: The role of supportive contexts in learning and development* (Technical Report No. 336). Champaign, IL: Center for the Study of Reading.

Bryan, B. (1986). Rural teachers' experiences: Lessons for today. *The Rural Educator, 7*(3), 1-5.

Chace, E. S. (1961). *An analysis of some effects of multiple-grade grouping in an elementary school.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee.

Cohen, E. (1980). A multi-ability approach to the integrated classrooms. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 196 989).

Cohen, E. (1984). Talking and working together: Status, interaction and learning. *In the Social Context of Instruction.* University of Wisconsin. (00. 171-187).

Cohen, E. G. (1986). *Teacher application pamphlet: Designing change for the classroom.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211 501).

Cohen, E. G. (1986). *Designing groupwork.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cohen, E., & Anthony, B. (1982). Expectation states theory and classroom learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 214 750).

Cohen, E., Deal, T., Meyer, J., & Scott, R. (1976). Organization and instruction in elementary schools: First results. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 132 656).

Cohen, E., & Intili, J. (1982). Interdependence and management in bilingual classrooms. Final report. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 229 840).

Cohen, E., Intili, J., & Robbins, S. (1978). Teachers and reading specialist: Cooperation or isolation? *The Reading Teacher, 32*(3), 291-287.

Cohen, E., Lockheed, M., & Lohman, M. (1976). The center for interracial cooperation: A field experiment. *Sociology of Education, 49*, 47-58.

Cohen, P. K., & Kulik, J. A. (December, 1981). Synthesis of research on the effects of tutoring. *Educational Leadership*, 227-229.

Cohen, P. K., Kulik, J. A., & Kulik, C. (1982). Educational outcomes of tutoring: A meta-analysis of findings. *American Educational Research Journal, 19*(2), 237-248.

Collins, J., & Calevro, M. (1974). *Mainstreaming special education using a peer tutoring system and minimum objective curriculum for nine eighth grade students.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 102 788).

Day, B., & Hunt, G. H. (1975). Multiage classrooms: Analysis of verbal communication. *Elementary School Journal, 75*, 458-464.

Devin-Sheehan, L., Feldman, R., & Allen, V. (1976). Research on children tutoring children: A critical review. *Review of Educational Research, 46[3)*, 355-386.

Dillon, J. T. (1988). *Questioning and teaching: A manual of practice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Dodendorf, D. M. (1983). A unique rural school environment. *Psychology in the schools, 20*, 99-104.

Doyle, W. (1986). Classroom organization and management. In *Handbook of Research on Teaching.* MacMillian Publishing Company, pp. 592-431.

Drier, W. H. (1949). The differential achievement of rural graded and ungraded school pupils. *Journal of Educational Research, 43*, 175-185.

Durkin, D. (1983). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. In L. M. Gentile, M. L. Kamil, & J. S. Blanchard (Eds.), *Reading Research Revisited.* Columbus: Charles Merril.

Dyer, T. A., (1989). *Teaching splits: Strategies for combination classrooms.* Bly, OR: Author.

Embry, J. (1981). *Utah's country schools since 1896.* Provo, UT: Brigham Young University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 221 273).

Emmer, E. T. (1987). Classroom management and discipline. In Virginia-Richardson-Koehler (Ed.) *Educators' handbook.* White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc., pp. 233-258.

Evangelou, D. (1989). *Mixed-age groups in early childhood education.* (EDO-PS-89-4). Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Evertson, C., Emmer, T., Clements, B., Sanford, Worsham, & Williams, E. (1981). *Organizing and managing the elementary school classroom.* Austin, TX: The Research and Development Center for Teacher Education.

Fogarty, M. (1979). *Small schools: Organization and teaching methods.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 223395).

Ford, B. (1977). Multiage grouping in the elementary school and children's affective development: A review of recent research. *The Elementary School Journal, 78*, 149-159.

Freeman, J. (1984). How I learned to stop worrying and love my combination class. *Instructor, 93*(7), 48-49.

Gibbons, M., & Phillips, G. (1978). Helping students through the self-education crisis. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 296-300.

Glatthorn, A. (1987). *Curriculum leadership.* Glenview, IL: Good Year Books.

Good, T. L., & Brophy, J. E. (1987). *Looking in classrooms.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Goodlad, J. I. (1986). *A place called school: Prospects for the future.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Goodlad, J. I., & Anderson, R. H. (1963). *The non-graded elementary school.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

Griswold, C. (1987). *Topic development for multi-level classrooms K-5: Incorporating essential learning skills.* Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education.

Guglielmino, L. (1977). Development of the self-directed learning readiness scale. Doctoral dissertation, The University of Georgia.

Hartup, W. W. (1976). Cross-age versus same-age interaction: Ethological and cross-cultural perspectives. In V. L. Allen (Ed.), *Children as teachers: Theory and research on tutoring* (pp. 41-54). New York: Academic Press.

Harvey, S. B. (1974). A comparison of kindergarten children in multigrade and traditional settings on self concept, social-emotional development, readiness development, and achievement. (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). *University Microfilms International, 35*, 3340-A.

Hiebert, E. (1980). Peers as reading teachers. *Language Arts, 57*, 877-881.

Hill, J. C. & Tanveer, S. A. (May, 1981). Kids teaching kids: It works. *The Educational Forum*, 425-432.

Hoffman, A. (1973). A nice warm situation. *Teacher, 91*, 42-45.

Holloway, S. D. (1988). Concepts of ability and effort in Japan and the United States. *Review of Educational Research, 58*(3), 327-343.

Horn, J. G. (1983). *Attempting to develop a program response to the needs of those preparing to teach in rural/small schools.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 230 320).

Horn, J. G. (1985). *Recruitment and preparation of quality teachers for rural schools.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 258 785).

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., Holubec, E. J., & Roy, P. (1984). *Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom.* Edward Brothers, Inc.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R., & Scott, L. (1978). The effects of cooprative and individualized instruction on student attitudes and achievement. *Journal of Social Psychology, 104*, 207-216.

Jones, B. J. (1987). Preservice programs for rural environments: Survey and recommendations. *Research in Rural Education, 4*, 3-8.

Joyce, B. & Weil, M. (1980). *Models of teaching.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Junell, J. S. (1970). *An analysis of the effects of multigrading on a number of non-cognitive variables.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington.

Kagan, S. (1989). *Cooperative learning: Resources for teachers.* San Juan Capistrano, CA: Resources for Teachers.

Kaplan, S. N. et al. (1973). *Change for children.* Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc.

Karweit, N. (1987). Diversity, equity, and classroom processes. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Social organization of schools: New conceptualization of learning* (pp. 71-102). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Kerry, T. (1984). Analyzing the cognitive demand made by classroom tasks in mixed-ability classes. In E. C. Wragg, (ED), *Classroom teaching skills* (pp. 163-178). New York, NY: Nichols Publishing Co.

Klein, M. F. (1982). Independent study. In *Encyclopedia of Education.* New York, NY: New York Free Press, pp. 835-843.

Knight, E. E. (1938). A study of double grades in New Haven City schools. *Journal of Experimental Education, 7,* 11-18.

Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners andteachers.* Chicago: Follett.

Lazerson, D. (1980). I must be good if I can teach peer tutoring with aggressive and withdrawn children. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13,* 43-48.

Lincoln, R. D. (1981). *The effect of single-grade and multi-grade primary school classroom on reading achievement of children.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut.

Ludeke, R. J., & Hartup, W. W. (1983). Teaching behavior of 9 and 11 year-old girls in mixed-age and same-age dyads. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 75*(6), 908-914.

MacDonald, P. A., & Wurster S. R. (1974). *Multiple grade primary versus segregated first grade: Effects on reading achievement.* Bethesda, MD. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 094 336).

Marshall, H. H. & Weinstein, R. S. (1984). Classroom factors affecting students' self-evaluations: An interactional model. *Review of Educational Research, 54*(3), 301-325.

Milburn, D. (1981). A study of multiage or family-grouped classrooms. *Phi Delta Kappan, 64,* 306-319.

Miller, B. A. (1988). *Teacher preparation for rural schools.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Miller, B. A. (1989). *The multigrade classroom: A resource handbook for small, rural schools.* (Contract No. 400-86-0006). Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Multnomah Education Service District (1983). *Goal guide: Tri-County Course Development Project.* Portland, OR: Author.

Murphy, J., Weil, M, & McGreal, T. L. (1986). The basic practice model of instruction. *The Elementary School Journal. 87*(1), 83-96.

Muse, I., Smith, R., & Barker, B. (1987). *The one teacher school in the 1980s.* Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

Mycock, M. A. (1966). A comparison of vertical grouping and horizontal grouping in the infant school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 37,* 133-135.

Palinscar, A., & Brown, A. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension– fostering and comprehension– monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction, 2,* 117-175.

Pierce, M. (1982). *Partner learning: Concept and rationale.* Paper presented at the International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children Meeting, Houston.

Pietila, A. (Ed.). (1978). *Small schools and combined grades in Finland.* Helsinki, Finland. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 161 564).

Pratt, C., & Treacy, K. (1986). *A study of student grouping practices in early childhood classes in western Australia government primary schools.* (Cooperative Research Series No. 9). Nedlands, Australia: Education Department of Western Australia.

Pratt, D. (1986). On the merits of multiage classrooms. *Research in Rural Education, 3,* 111-115.

Price, K., & Dequine, M. (1982). Peer tutoring: It builds skills and self-concept. *Academic Therapy, 17,* 365-371.

Reed, F. (1976). *Peer tutoring programs for the academically deficient student in higher education.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 113 981).

Rosenbaum, J. E. (1980). Social implications of educational grouping. In David Berliner (Ed.) *Review of Research in Education.* American Educational Research Association, pp. 361-401.

Rosenholtz, S. (1979). The classroom equalizer. *Teacher, 97*(1), 78-79.

Rosenholtz, S. J., & Cohen, E. (1983). Back to basics and the desegregated school. *Elementary School Journal, 83*(5), 515-527.

Rosenholtz, S. J., & Simpson, C. (1984a). The formation of ability conceptions: Developmental trend or social construction? *Review of Educational Research, 54*(1), 31-63.

Rosenholtz, S., & Simpson, C. (1984b). Classroom organization and student stratification. *The Elementary School Journal, 85*(1), 21-37.

Rule, G. (1983). Effects of multigrade grouping on elementary student achievement in reading and mathematics (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University). *Dissertation Information Service* No. 8315672.

Sarason, S. B. (1982). *The culture of the school and the problem of change.* Second edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

School Improvement Program. (1986). *Onward to excellence training manual for workshop 4: Prescription development.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Schrankler, W. J. (1976). Family grouping and the affective domain. *Elementary School Journal, 76,* 432-439.

Schroeder, R., & Nott, R. E. (1974). Multiage grouping—it works! *Catalyst for Change, 3,* 15-18.

Sharan, S. (1980). Cooperative learning in small groups: Recent methods and effects on achievement, attitudes, and ethnic relations. *Review of Educational Research, 50,* 588-597.

Sharpley, A., & Sharpley, C. (1981). Peer tutoring: A review of the literature. *Collect Original Resources in Education (CORE), 5, 3, &-C11,* (fiche 7 & 8). 35 South Street, Hopkinton, MA 01748.

Sherman, L. W. (1984). Social distance perceptions of elementary school children in age-heterogeneous and homogeneous classroom settings. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 58,* 395-409.

Slavin, R. E. (1980). Cooperative learning. *Review of Educational Research, 50*(2), 315-342.

Slavin, R. (1983). *Cooperative Learning.* New York: Longman.

Slavin, R. E. (1986). *Ability grouping and student achievement in elementary schools: A best evidence synthesis* (Report No. 1). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Slavin, R. E. (1986). *Using student team learning.* Third edition. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Slavin, R. E. (1987). Developmental and motivational perspectives on cooperative learning: A reconciliation. *Child Development, 58,* 1161-1167.

Slavin, R. E. (1988). Synthesis of research on grouping in elementary and secondary schools. *Educational Leadership, 46*(1), 67-77.

Slavin, R. E., & Madden, N. A. (1989). What works for students at risk: A research synthesis. *Educational Leadership, 46,* 4-13.

Soloman, D., Watson, M., Delucchi, K., Schaps, E., & Battistich, V. (1988). Enhancing children's prosocial behavior in the classroom. *American Educational Research Journal, 25*(4), 527-554.

Thomas, J., Strage, A., & Curley, R. (1988). Improving students' self-directed learning: Issues and guidelines. *The Elementary School Journal, 88*(3), 313-326.

Topping, K. (1988). *The peer tutoring handbook.* Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

UNESCO. (1981). *Education of disadvantaged groups and multiple class teaching: Studies and innovative approaches.* (Report of a Study Group Meeting). Jakarta.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Edited by M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walberg, H. (May, 1984). Improving the productivity of America's schools. *Educational Leadership,* 19-27.

Way, J. W. (1969). *The effects of multiage grouping on achievement and self-concept.* Cortland: State University of New York, Cortland College, Institute for Experimentaton in Teacher Education.

Webb, N. M. (1982). Group composition, group interaction, and achievement in cooperative small groups. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*(4), 475-484.

Weinstein, R. S., & Marshall, H. H. (1984). *Ecology of students' achievement expectations.* Final report. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 257 820).

Wellington Department of Education. (1977). *The rural school.* Wellington, New Zealand: E. C. Keating, Government Printer.

Westinghouse Learning Corporation. (1973). *The PLAN® teacher's manual.* USA: Author.

Whiting, B. B. (1983). The genesis of prosocial behavior. In D. Bridgeman (Ed.), *The nature of prosocial development.* New York: Academic Press.

Wigginton, E. (1985). *Sometimes a shining moment.* Garden City: Doubleday.

Wragg, E. C. (1984). Teaching Skills. In E. C. Wragg (Ed.), *Classroom teaching skills.* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Nichols Publishing Company.

Yarrow, A. (1979). Mathematics. In Fogarty, M. (Ed.). *Small schools: Organization and teaching methods* (pp. 41-59). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 223 395).

Yerry, M. J. & Henderson, Edward. (1964). *Effects of interage grouping on achievement and behavior: End of year report.* (Experimental Program No. A-27-63). Bethpage, NY: Plainedge Public Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 037 802).

RESOURCES

The following annotated list of resources was prepared by Bruce A. Miller and included in his handbook, *The Multigrade Classroom: A Resource Handbook for Small, Rural Schools*, published in 1989 by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Reprinted with permission.

Ashley, W., et al. *Peer tutoring: A guide to program design.* Research and development series no. 260. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 268 372)

This publication presents guidelines for planning, implementing, and evaluating a peer tutoring program. Benefits, guidelines, and suggestions with examples for peer tutoring are presented. Resource materials and sample forms have also been included.

Available from:
National Center for Research in Vocational Education
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
Price: $10.50

***

Blackwood, L. (1987). *More like a school family than just a teacher and his/her students: Is a one teacher school for you . . .?* Anchorage, AK: L. C.'s Manner.

This booklet contains one teacher's opinion as "how to successfully and effectively teach in a small one-teacher school or other multigraded settings in rural Alaska." There are also useful ideas and strategies that would be beneficial to any multigrade teacher.

Available from:
L. C.'s Manner
2440 E. Tudor Road
Suite 950
Anchorage, AK 99507
Price: $12.00

***

Bloom, S. (1975). *Peer and cross-age tutoring in the schools: An individualized supplement to group instructin.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 118 543)

This publication discusses tutoring concepts and developing a tutoring program for your classroom. A detailed bibliography is also included.

Available from:
ERIC
3900 Wheeler Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22304-6409
1-800-227-3742
Price: $8.50

***

Burns, M. (1976). *The book of think or how to solve problems twice your size (grades 5 and up).* Boston: Little Brown & Company.

This book was recommended by Joel Anderson, a multigrade teacher from Onion Creek School in northeast Washington State. Anderson says this is an excellent resource for cooperative problem-solving activities in mathematics.

Available from:
Little Brown and Company
200 West St.
Waltham, MA 02254
Price: $7.95 (paper)

***

Burns, M. (1975). *The I hate mathematics! Book.* Boston: Little Brown & Company.

This book was also recommended by Joel Anderson.

Available from:
Little Brown & Company
200 West Street
Waltham, MA 02254
Price: $7.95 (paper)

•••

Canter, L. (1989). *Assertive descipline.* Los Angeles: Canter and Associates Inc.

Lee Canter has popularized an approach to classroom discipline called assertive discipline. His program provides detailed training materials, including lesson plan books, charts, sample rules and consequences, and specific ideas for rewarding positive behavior.

Available from:
Canter and Associates Inc.
P. O. Box 64517
Los Angeles, CA 90064
Price: $7.95

•••

Cohen, E. G. (1986). *Teacher application pamphlet: Designing change for the classroom.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211 501)

This study provides a theoretical rationale for using small groups, directions on how to train children in small group behavior and specific activities to be used during training, and information on adapting existing curriculum for small group work.

Available from:
ERIC
3900 Wheeler Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22304-6409
1-800-227-3742
Price: $23.60

•••

Cohen, E. G. (1986). *Designing groupwork.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

This book provides detailed strategies for starting group work in your classroom and details the research supporting cooperative work groups. The book is written in a direct, clear style that makes it easy to follow and useful to the classroom teacher.

Available from:
Teachers College Press
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027
Price: $13.95

•••

Curwin, R., & Mendler, A. (1988). *Discipline with dignity.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

This book presents research-based processes and strategies for developing positive classroom behavior. It begins by focusing on the dignity of the student and recasts the teacher from being a "policeman" to be an individual who mediates learning. Excellent sets of guidelines, observations instruments, and resources are included.

Available from:
Associaton for Supervision
and Curriculum Development
Alexandria, Virginia
Price: $9.95

•••

Della-Dora, D., & Blanchard, L. (Eds.). (1979). *Moving toward self-directed learning.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

This book reviews the research on self-directed learning, provides practical strategies, and presents background information useful to anyone desiring to develop self-directed learning in students.

Available from:
ASCD
225 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Price: $4.75

•••

Dennison, B., et al. (1978). *Rearranging the traditional two-teacher school to fit the linear multiple-area plan.*

This article describes a plan for converting a traditional two-room school into an open teaching space in which two teachers teach cooperatively. A sample floor plan is presented.

Available from:
ERIC
3900 Wheeler Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22304-6409
1-800-227-3742
Price: $2.00

•••

Dyer, T. A. (1989). *Teaching splits: Strategies for combination classrooms.* Bly, OR: Author.

The research paper describes what teachers of combined grades do to successfully cope with a two-grade classroom. Dyer visited more than 10 combination classrooms and interviewed the teachers. This report summarizes his findings.

Available from:
Thomas Dyer
P. O. Box 47
Bly, OR 97622
Price: unknown

•••

Ethly, S. *Peer tutoring in the regular classroom: A guide for school psychologist.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 250 836)

This guide includes a general overview of the peer tutoring process, including selecting and pairing students, supervising the process, and scheduling. Training goals are specified along with skills needed by tutors. A reference section with recommended readings has been appended.

Available from:
National Association of School Psychologists
10 Overland Drive
Stratford, CT 06497
Price: $12.60

•••

Evertson, C., Emmer, E., Clements, B., Sanford, J., & Worsham, M. (1989). *Classroom management for elementary teachers.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

This "how-to" guide provides research-based step-by-step activities and principles for planning and organizing the elementary classroom.

Available from:
Prentice Hall, Inc.
9W, Englewood Cliffs, NJ
Price: $17.95 (paper)

•••

Fogarty, M. (1979). *Small schools: Organization and teaching methods.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 223 395)

This booklet addresses issues relating to small schools organization. Sections regarding the teaching of reading, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, language arts, and art are presented. Aspects such as objectives, content, methodologies, organizing time and space, and resources are also discussed.

Available from:
ERIC
3900 Wheeler Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22304-6409
1-800-227-3742
Price: $14.00

•••

Good, T. L., & Brophy, J. E. (1987). *Looking in classrooms.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

This book may be one of the most exhaustive collections of effective teaching information to date. Filled with practical, concrete ideas and strategies drawn from observations of effective teachers, this book is important for every professional library.

Available from:
Harper & Row Publishers
Keystone Industrial Park
Scranton, PA 18512
Price: $26.75

•••

Griswold, C. (1987). *Topic development for multi-level classrooms, K-5: Incorporating essential learning skills.* Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education.

This booklet was developed for the Oregon Department of Education as a resource for helping multigrade teachers integrate essential learning skills across subject areas. Griswold provides sample integrated lessons along with a guide for developing your own lessons.

Available from:
Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Pkwy, S.E.
Salem, OR 97310
Price: Free (while supplies last)

***

Grossnickle, D., & Sesko, F. (1985). *Promoting effective discipline in school and classroom: A practitioner's perspective.* Reston, VA: NASSP.

This monograph describes how to develop a comprehensive discipline program, including many models that can be easily adapted and used.

Available from:
National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
Price: $6.00 (paper)

***

Interact. (1989). A catalogue of elementary simulations. Lakeside, CA: Interact.

This company provides a large number of cooperative learning and integrated curriculum materials. It comes highly recommended by multigrade teachers.

Available from:
Post Office Box 997G
Lakeside, CA 92040
Price: Free

***

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., Holubec, E. J., & Roy, P. (1984). *Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom.* Edward Brothers, Inc.

The authors present the underlying concepts regarding cooperative learning. Steps for implementing cooperation in your classroom and the research supporting it are also presented.

Available from:
ASCD
125 N. West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2798
Price: $8.50

***

Joyce, B., & Weil, M. (1986). *Models of teaching.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

This book reviews the most common models of teaching, including detailed examples and strategies for implementing each module. Examples of models included are: Inquiry, concept attainment, inductive thinking, group investigation, etc.

Available from:
Prentice Hall, Inc.
200 Old Tappan Rd.
Old Tappan, NJ 07675
Price: $40.00

***

Kagan, S. (1989). *Cooperative learning: Resources for teachers.* Laguna Niguel, CA: Resources for Teachers.

This book provides a detailed guide for implementing the structural approach to cooperative learning. It includes a guide to resources in cooperative learning and an overview of cooperative learning research. There is a wealth of concrete strategies for teachers to use.

Available from:
Resources for Teachers
27134 Paseo Espada #202
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
Price: $20.00

***

McKisson, M. (1981). *Chrysalis: Nurturing creative and independent thought in children grades 4-12.* Tucson, AZ: Zephyr Press Learning Materials.

Chrysalis consists of eight units designed to develop thinking, creativity, appreciation of self and others, self-reliance, and abilities in independent learning and skills of research.

Available from:
Zephyr Press Learning Materials
430 South Essex Lane
Tucson, AZ 85711
Price: $29.95

•••

Oldfield, M. J. (unknown). *Tell and draw stories: More tell and draw stories: Lots more tell and draw stories.* Minneapolis: Creative Storytime Press.

This book was recommended by Joel Anderson, a multigrade teacher from Onion Creek School in northeast Washingon State. Anderson says this is an excellent resource for writing activities.

Available from:
Creative Storytime Press
P. O. Box 572
Minneapolis, MN 55454
Price: $5.95 (paper)

•••

Orlick, T. (1978). *Cooperative sports and games book—challenge without competition.* New York: Pantheon Books.

This book was recommended by Joel Anderson, a multigrade teacher from Onion Creek School in northeast Washington State. Anderson says this is an excellent resource for cooperative sports and other activities.

Available from:
Pantheon Books
201 E. 50th St.
New York, NY 10022
Price: $10.00

•••

Slavin, R. E. (1986). *Using student team learning.* Third edition. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

"This teacher's manual describes a set of practical instructional techniques that involve students in cooperative activities built around the learning of school subjects. These are techniques developed and researched at Johns Hopkins University, plus related methods developed elsewhere." (From the Introduction by Slavin, p. 5).

Available from:
The Johns Hopkins Team Learning Project
Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools
Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
Price: $8.95

•••

TOPS Learning Systems. (1989). TOPS Learning Systems Catalogue of Science Materials. Canby, OR: TOPS Learning Systems.

TOPS Learning Systems produces science units. The materials use a worksheet format that is self-instructional and may be self-paced. All materials required to conduct the activities are inexpensive and/or commonly available. For example, the unit on electricity uses tinfoil instead of wire for conducting electricity. TOPS also produces units on magnetics, balancing and other science areas.

Available from:
TOPS Learning Systems
10970 S. Mulino Road
Canby, OR 97013
Price: From $6.95 to $15.70

•••

Topping, K. (1988). *The peer tutoring handbook.* Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

This peer tutoring handbook provides a detailed set of checklists for setting up and running a peer-tutoring program. Research on tutoring has been reviewed and an extensive set of references included.

Available from:
Brookline Books
P. O. Box 1046
Cambridge, MA 02238
Price: $18.95

***

Vail, N., & Papenfuss, J. (1982). *Daily oral language.* Racine, WI: D. O. L. Publications.

Daily Oral Language was recommended by numerous multigrade teachers. It is a booklet of sentences that need to be edited and rewritten. The teachers who recommended it said they used them as a daily "sponge" or warm-up activity before lessons began.

Available from:
D. O. L. Publications
1001 Kingston Avenue
Racine, WI 53402
Price: not available

***

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Survey Respondents
Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey

Darlene Alderman
Bobby Ashley
Melissa Ashley
Constance Bataller
Brenda Moore Boone
Bonnie Bracey
Ronald Brim
Jo Caraway
Peter Clements
Susan Collins
Jackie Combs
Linda Cox
Annette Dashiell
Carolyn Dixon
Ginny Drennan
Judith Duncan
Ben Fischer
Barbara Gusler
William Hamilton
Thomas Henderson
Susan Hirt
Oira Iroler
Janie Jernigain
Sally Jones
Mark Keeler
Twila Lee
Lucella Lewis
Carol Ann Locke
Christy Martin
Joanna Moore
Shirley Moore
Linda Morris
Sue Ann Morris
Linda Mullen
Patricia Miller
Nancy Noble
Melinda Parsons
Mary Ann Peterman
Cheryl Rodgers
Jessica Ruff
Vanna Ruffner
Nancy Slusher
H. Stapleton
Marg Stephens
Diane Stone
Deborah Straniero
Jerry Stuart
Sheree Swineford
Mary Thacker
Pat Weaver
Debbie Whitehurst
Merle Williams

23 anonymous responses

APPENDIX B

Memorandum

TO: VEA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

FROM: HELEN ROLFE, VEA IPD DIRECTOR AND JANE HANGE, CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION PROGRAM DIRECTOR, AEL

DATE: APRIL 6, 1990

SUBJECT: RECRUITMENT OF GRADE COMBINATION TEACHERS FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION

During the last five years VEA and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory have collaboratively sponsored and facilitated the work of several study groups of VEA members.

The 1990 VEA-AEL study group of five members are grade combination teachers, teachers who teach classes of students at two grade levels such as a grade 2-3 split. The study group members, aided by VEA and AEL staff, are investigating the advantages and disadvantages of such assignments and wish to draw on the experiences of teachers throughout Virginia. We need your help in locating grade combination teachers who should receive a copy of the study group-developed "Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey." While the group's initial investigation will focus on elementary teachers' experience, we are interested in eventually gathering information from teachers with grade combination assignments from all levels.

Please complete the following form with contact information for all grade combination teachers in your school and mail it to VEA or telephone Faye Orrell or Helen Rolfe at VEA (800) 552-9554 with this information as soon as possible. Please add names on back of the form or copy and send additional forms, if necessary. Each participating school will receive a copy of the group's final product. Teacher survey respondents will be acknowledged in the publication. All data will be used anonymously and will be aggregated. The final publication of suggestions for effective practices for grade combination teachers and recommendations for policy makers at the division and state levels will be printed and distributed by VEA (in Virginia) and AEL. Thanks very much for your assistance with a project that will help Virginia's grade combination teachers.

VEA-AEL GRADE COMBINATION TEACHER LOCATER FORM

School Name School Address School Phone Number

Teacher Name Teaching Assignment Address-if other than above

Add others on back of sheet.

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO FAYE ORRELL OR HELEN ROLFE AT VEA, 116 S. Third St., Richmond, Virginia 23219 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

APPENDIX C

Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perceptions Survey

A study group of grade combination teachers cosponsored by the Virginia Education Association (VEA) and Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) are investigating the advantages and disadvantages of grade combination classes. Your name was provided to the group by the VEA building representative in your school. Study group members are surveying all grade combination teachers in Virginia elementary schools and will use respondent anonymity with aggregated responses only in analyzing and reporting their findings.

The final product, a publication with technique suggestions for grade combination teachers and policy recommendations for division and state policy makers, will be available in early fall 1990 from VEA and AEL. Each school in which a teacher(s) provided survey responses will receive a copy of the publication. If you have questions regarding the study or the survey, please contact Helen Rolfe, VEA (800-552-9554) or Jane Hange or Becky Burns, AEL (800-624-9120). We appreciate your help as will the educators who read of your experience with grade combination classes.

Please respond to each item below regarding your experience with and perceptions of grade combination classes. Attach additional response sheets if needed.

Name (optional)_____

School Division_____

1. Are you currently teaching a grade combination class?
   ☐ yes ☐ no
   If you answered no, please do not return the survey. Thank you.
2. If you answered yes to question #1, what grades are combined in your class?_____
3. What is the approximate student enrollment of your school? _____
4. Have you taught grade combination classes in the past?
   ☐ yes ☐ no

   If you answered yes, please check your years of grade combination teaching experience below.
   ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-6 years ☐ 7-9 years ☐ 10 or more years

   How many total years of teaching experience do you have?
   ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16 or more years
5. Have you requested grade combination class teaching assignments or were you assigned a combined class?
   ☐ requested ☐ assigned ☐ both (at different times)
6. Have you taught combination classes in consecutive years?
   ☐ yes ☐ no

7. How many students are enrolled in your combination class? _____

Please complete the following enrollment data about your combination class. Fill in the blanks with numbers of students.

_____lower grade students
_____boys
_____physically handicapped
_____hearing impaired
_____severely language impaired
_____EMR
_____learning disabled (resource room)
_____Chapter I served or qualified
_____upper grade students
_____girls
_____blind
_____autistic
_____limited English proficiency
_____ED
_____learning disabled (self-contained classroom)

8. What percentage of your students are served by "pull-out" programs?_____

9. Was your 1989-90 class a grade combination class from the first day of school?
☐ yes ☐ no
If no, in what month did it become a grade combination class? _____

10. For which of the following subjects do you have two or more preparations? Check any that apply.
☐ math ☐ science
☐ reading ☐ handwriting
☐ spelling ☐ social studies
☐ health ☐ English mechanics
☐ family.life ☐ English composition, developmental writing

11. For which of the following subjects do you also prepare lessons? Check any that apply.
☐ art ☐ music ☐ physical education
☐ foreign language ☐ gifted and talented/enrichment
☐ other, please specify_____

12. Who helps you teach? Check any person listed who assists your instruction in some way.
☐ full-time instructional aide
☐ half-time instructional aide ____number of days/week ____number of hours/day
☐ parent volunteer(s) _____number
☐ student teacher
☐ team teacher(s) _____number
☐ librarian
☐ principal
☐ content specialist who teaches class
☐ instructional supervisor or curriculum specialist
☐ other, please specify_____

13. What resources do you use frequently in instruction? Check any that apply.
- ☐ personal computers
- ☐ audiovisual equipment
- ☐ teacher's manual for each subject and grade
- ☐ supplemental instructional materials for each grade
- ☐ science kits
- ☐ math kits
- ☐ math manipulatives
- ☐ classroom space which allows grouping
- ☐ learning centers

14. Do you take your class on field trips or send students on grade-assigned field trips?
- ☐ take own class
- ☐ send students on grade-assigned field trips
- ☐ neither
- ☐ both

15. Please describe any difficulties you have experienced in teaching curricula of two grade levels. Attach additional response pages if necessary.

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. Please describe advantages you perceive to teaching grade combination classes. Attach additional response pages if necessary.

_____
_____
_____
_____

17. Which, if any, of the following instructional methods have you found to be effective in teaching a grade combination class? Check any that apply and please describe any additional effective strategies you use.

	Rank
☐ team teaching	_____
☐ integrating curriculum	_____
☐ cooperative learning groups	_____
☐ peer tutoring ☐ cross-age ☐ within-grade	_____
☐ other, please describe_____	_____

_____

Please rank above the frequency with which you use instructional methods you checked from 1 = most frequently used to 5 = least frequently used.

18. Does your school principal assist your work? If so, please describe how. If not, please suggest ways a principal could assist.

_____

_____

19. What professional development experiences have helped you in teaching a combination grade class? Check any that apply.

- ☐ inservice education sessions
- ☐ educator association conferences
- ☐ teacher support group or network
- ☐ peer observations
- ☐ mentor
- ☐ professional reading
- ☐ other, please describe_____

20. Please suggest any school, division, or state policies which would make teaching grade combination classes more effective for students and desirable for teachers.

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. The study group product resulting from this survey will be read by grade combination teachers and others. Please describe practices or strategies you have found effective for various teaching situations (eg. getting started, classroom management, grouping, time management, student socialization within your class and within grade levels, parent relationships, etc.). Attach additional response pages if needed.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey and returning it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by April 30 to the Virginia Education Association, 116 S. Third St., Richmond, VA 23219. If further information is necessary, may we contact you by telephone? If so, please furnish your school phone number and a time when you may be reached for a brief interview. Thank you!

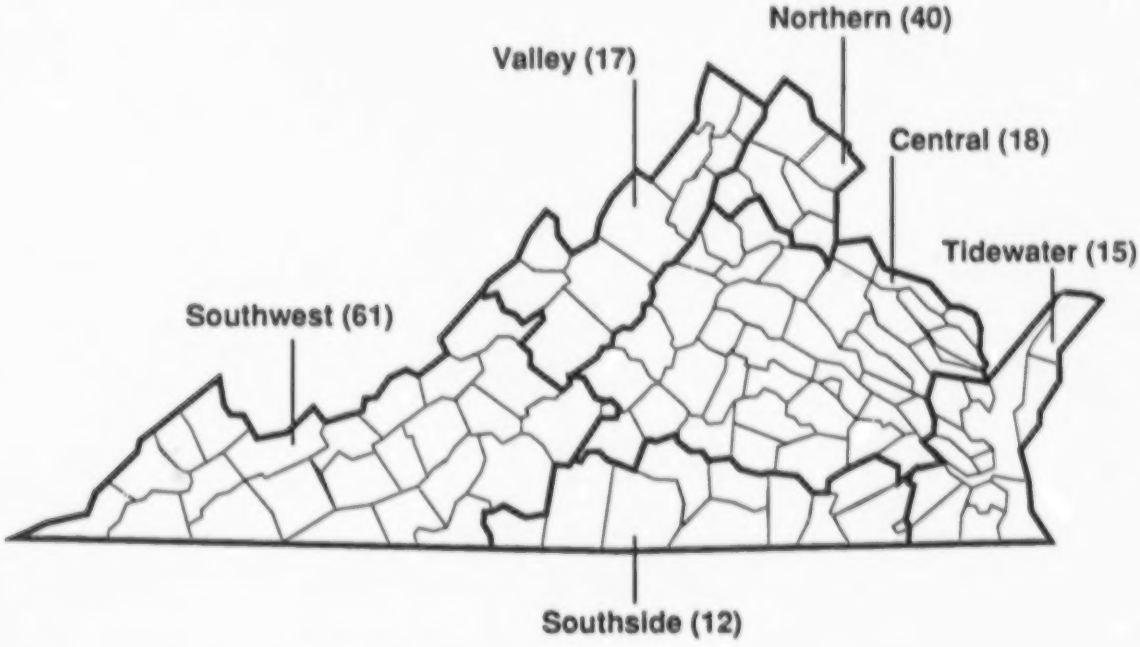
School phone with area code _____ Time_____

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

The prevalence of grade combination classes across Virginia was a topic of interest in this study. The distribution of such classes may be related to the numbers of rural small schools in various areas of the state. Data analysis from respondents to the VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Locater Form (See Appendix B) can be used to assess the nature of this relationship.

This map of Virginia, divided into six geographic regions identified by VEA, depicts the distribution of grade combination classes based on responses to the VEA-AEL Grade Combination Teacher Locater Form, which was mailed to all 2,088 VEA building representatives across the state. One hundred sixty-three grade combination teachers were identified by 80 VEA building representatives who returned completed Grade Combination Teacher Locater Forms to VEA. The number of Grade Combination Teacher Experience and Perception Surveys then mailed to grade combination teachers identified in each area is indicated on the map. While recognizing that some building representatives whose schools contain grade combination classes may not have returned the Locater Form, study group members believe the actual distribution of classes across Virginia is similar to the number of surveys mailed per region. Data confirming the frequency and distribution of such teaching assignments was not available from the Virginia Department of Education.



The frequency of surveys mailed per region indicates a prevalence of grade combination classes in the Northern and Southwestern Virginia regions, areas characterized by neighborhood schools. While divisions of the Southwestern region are predominantly rural, sites where small schools with one or fewer classes per grade are common, the Northern region is Virginia's most populous. The differing characteristics of these two regions makes further study essential before a clear relationship between grade combination teaching and ruralness in Virginia school divisions can be described.

Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Study Group Product Assessment Form

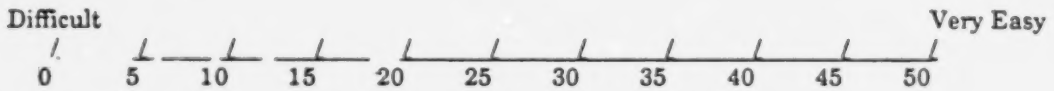
A. Background

1. Name of Product: Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices
2. Name: _____
3. School/District: _____
4. Type of Job You Hold: _____
5. State: _____

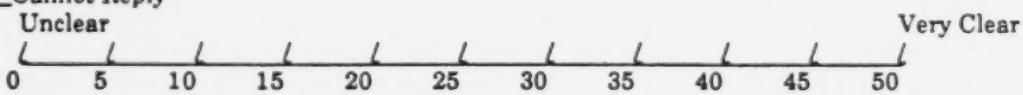
B. Rating

This instrument asks you to evaluate this particular product on a series of product quality scales. Please mark your responses with an "X" (corresponding to your answer) at any point along the scale provided. If you cannot reply to any scale, please check the "Cannot Reply" option for that item.

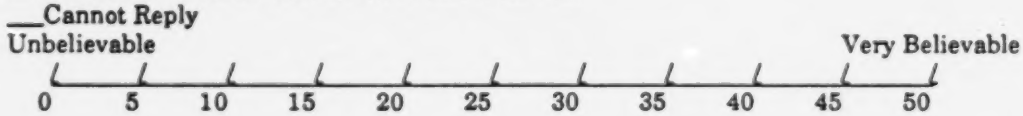
1. How easy was it for your to get this material?
___Cannot Reply



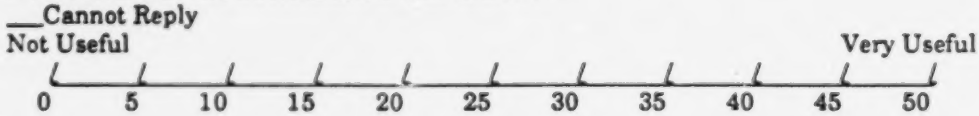
2. How clearly presented was the information in this material?
___Cannot Reply



3. How credible was the information in this material?
___Cannot Reply



4. How useful was the information in this material?
___Cannot Reply



5. Which sections of the report have you found helpful? Please explain briefly how these sections helped you.

Please turn to back

6. What changes would make the report more valuable?

7. How did you learn of the availability of this report?

8. Have you shared your copy with other educators? If so, how many?

Thank you for completing this evaluation/contribution form.
Please fold, staple, stamp, and mail to AEL.

Affix
Postage
Here

AEL

P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325